

**HIST 585-10: Special Topics in History:**

(cross-listed with RLHT 712R-1)

Topic: Theology of Augustine

Instructor	Day(s)	Time(s)	Maximum Enrollment
Briggman	TH	1:00 – 4:00 pm	10

**Semester Description:**

This seminar will consider the life and thought of Augustine of Hippo. Our aim will be to grasp the fundamentals of Augustine’s theology by examining his writings leading up to and following the turn of the fifth century. The working assumption of the seminar is that if you understand the developments that take place in Augustine’s thought between 387 and 406, you will be prepared to understand his later thought as well.

We will use *Confessions* as the spine of the course, thereby enabling us to approach Augustine’s thought chronologically for as long as a chronological approach works (that is, through *Confessions* 8). Using *Confessions* also permits us to encounter ‘organically’ many of the key features of his theology. Among the topics we will explore are the following: the importance of Stoic moral psychology to his conception of the will, Manichaeism, the problem of evil, grace and conversion, the freedom of the will, his response to Pelagianism, his Trinitarian theology, and his Christology & response to Arianism.

**Required Textbooks, Articles, and Resources:**

1. *Augustine: Earlier Writings*. The Library of Christian Classics: Ichthus Edition. Edited by J.H.S. Burleigh. Westminster Press, 1953.  
**ISBN:** 9780664241629.
2. Saint Augustine. *Confessions*. Oxford World’s Classics. Translated and annotated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford University Press, 2009.  
**ISBN:** 978-0199537822.
3. Peter Brown. *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*. New edition with epilogue. University of California Press, 2000.  
**ISBN:** 978-0520280410.
4. James Wetzel. *Augustine and the limits of virtue*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.  
**ISBN:** 978-0521064811.

Miscellaneous texts listed in the reading schedule.

**Grading:**

1. Rotating class notes

Students shall take notes on 2 to 4 (depending on class size) seminar discussions and email the notes to your classmates and me prior to our next meeting.

2. Course Paper (12-15 pages)

A successful paper will articulate and defend a thesis statement arising from original interaction with primary and secondary sources. The paper is due December 9th: it must be handed into me in hard copy and by email. Though in the end one paper, students must approach the paper in three distinct phases, each requiring its own submission.

- A. The first stage: a dense reading (~5 pages, single-spaced). The point of this exercise is to determine the meaning of a given passage by a close reading of a text in its immediate context and by identifying the demonstrable influences upon the formation of thought found in a given passage. A dense reading is a historical reading – a reading that limits the study of any particular text to other texts that are either contemporary, or prior, to the text under study. Later texts are extraneous and ruled “out of bounds”: do not cite or otherwise take into consideration any primary source that appears after the text under consideration.

Here’s how to proceed. Identify the passage or passages central to your research topic. Break the passage down into sentences that reveal the logic of the pericope. If you are able, consult the original language of the passage (in a critical edition, if possible) – note keywords, inadequate translations, technical terminology, etc. Identify any exegetical forms, as well as ideas or terms that seem philosophical (in any way technical, that is, genre-specific) in origin or use – quote examples. Identify any Scripture in the passage, and determine if it has figured in any writings contemporary, or prior, to the text under consideration – quote examples showing how the uses compare. Determine if the idea(s) expressed in the sentence(s) of the passage is/are related to ideas in other applicable works (“related” means: possibly derived from, or influenced by, or like, or different from in a specific way, or contrasting, etc.; remember to check earlier or contemporary works by the same author) – any passages quoted should help you to “unpack” the meaning of the text under study (this should not be a mere list). Quote cognate material you find in other applicable texts: again, quoted passages should help you in the determination of meaning. Provide a 2-3 – paragraph summary of your research.

Please note that this paper is single-spaced, however, most of this stage should consist of quotations taken from other material. The only truly original part of this summary is the concluding 2-3 – paragraph summary stating what the passage means/says based upon your research. Due in class on November 7<sup>th</sup>.

- B. The second stage: a *status quaestionis* (2 pages, double-spaced) and bibliography (~1 page, single spaced). The goal of a *status quaestionis* is to acquaint a reader, in this case me, with the state of scholarship on a particular point of inquiry. In this particular case, your task will be to provide a 2-page summary of the state of scholarship on the topic upon which you plan to write. This should add to and synthesize the secondary sources you quoted in the dense reading. Your *status quaestionis* should be accompanied by a bibliography which should include primary and secondary sources. Due in class on November 21<sup>st</sup>.

- C. The third stage: the course paper itself (12-15 pages). The course paper consists of your original interaction with the findings arising out of your dense reading and *status quaestionis* (indeed much of this paper should be taken directly, or nearly so, from the first two stages of your work). This original interaction entails the articulation and defense of a thesis statement. Due on December 9<sup>th</sup>.